ARAMBE FLAME

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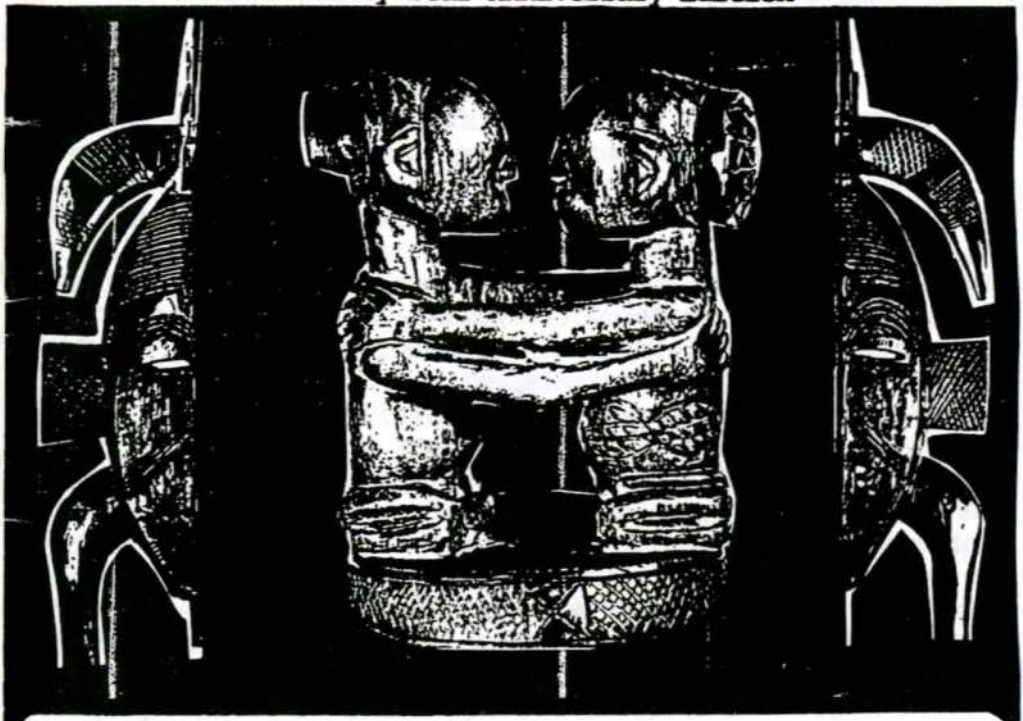
Almost Twenty-Year Anniversary Edition



In This Edition:

Back In Time: Activities Of Our Organization; **Back In Time:** Our People's History; **Kuumba:** Poetry, Graphics.

See page 24 for introduction.

HARAMBEE FLAME EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly newsletter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(Nebraska State Pen chapter). Ours is a pan-Africanist publication, meaning that we view all people of African descent as one African people, having certain basic interests in common. Also, the HARAMBEE FLAME attempts to be Africentric, in that, through study of the history, cultures, and traditional values of African people, we week to have and cultivate an African way of looking at things.

The main purposes of the HARAMBEE FLAME are to stimulate and inform. We list "stimulate" first because, more than anything else, we want our readers to be moved to question their/your own ideas, lives, and the circumstances in which we live and to challenge those things that must be challenged in order for us to move from a condition of mental and spiritual servitude and physical dependence upon Caucasian institutions to a state of collective self-determination. Toward this purpose, we present commentaries, poems, etc. These do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

The HARAMBEE FLAME provides information because wise people want to know what's going on and because certain kinds of information can stimulate the mind, inspire people to want to act, and influence them to pursue proper understanding so that the actions they take will be as effective as possible. The main vehicle we use to provide information is our "From Other Sources" feature in which we make an effort to provide news about the problems we African people are confronted by and the steps we are taking to resolve them. In this feature, we try to provide coverage of the activities of African people and developments affecting us in the U.S., the nations of Africa, and elsewhere. In "Commentary," we offer analysis of and views about current events and developments.

We encourage you to send your comments, essays, poems, etc. to HARAMBEE FLAME; Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68542-2500.

BACK IN TIME

Brothers And Sisters: A Meeting Of Minds

At our Feb. 11th. general membership meeting, we conducted a program on relations between black men and women. This issue has become of increasing concern to many black men and women in this country over the past several months. The black men who comprise Harambee have an intense concern about this question in that imprisonment and its accompanying isolation of men from women sharpens our awareness, often painfully so, of the value of our Sisters to us.

This awareness was made plainly evident during this program of the 11th. That there are serious problems of misunderstanding and gaps of communication was also made evident. The five Sisters from the African People's Union at U.N.L. and the twenty-five or so Harambee members and inside guests had an exciting and generally open discussion of what they perceived as the main obstacles to understanding and love between Brothers and Sisters. Among the primary obstacles cited by the Sisters were: overly materialist values on the part of black men, their readiness to choose white women over black women, and their tendency to be uptight about what they see as being their "manhood." The Brothers' major concerns seemed to be: that black women too readily give up on their men, particularly when they wind up in prison; that they put too much pressure on their men to achieve economically; and that, when black women are college educated, they tend to "lord it over" their men.

The program made it apparent that we have a lot of work to do as a people to deal with this important issue. But it was also evident that we can open lines of communication if we are simply willing to be honest with ourselves, with each other. There will be a follow-up program on the 3rd. of March at six in the evening. We thank Hadari and Shamari of the Lincoln chapter of the Pan-African Secretariat and Deresa of the African People's Union for being of aid to us in instituting this effort to bring about understanding.

-February, 1980

H.A.C.O. Meets With Journalists

On October 19th. and November 2nd. the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization conducted programs on the topic of the role of American-born Afrikans in the news media. Several American-born Afrikan reporters and newscasters joined us in these sessions, as did others of our Brothers and Sisters from the Black communities in Omaha and Lincoln.

Among the subject areas discussed were: whether American-born Afrikans in the media saw themselves as primarily accountable to their employers or to their Black communities, the role that White racism plays in hiring and promotions, the contradiction between the American-born Afrikan's responsibility and desire to provide his community and the public generally with accurate and valid insight into events of the day and the racial and political biases of station or newspaper management, etc.

We were very encouraged by the spirit and attitudes of the reporters who met with us. We were encouraged by their enthusiasm and willingness to listen to the numerous concerns expressed and their apparent readiness to sharpen their impact, in a positive way, upon the consciousness of American-born Afrikan people...

-October, 1981 [We didn't identify the journalists in the above report because we suspected that, for us to do so, might draw employers' heat down on these sisters and brothers.]

H.A.C.O. Holds First Kwanzaa Celebration

On the evening of December 21st., the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, in conjunction with the 1-11 Jaycees, conducted a celebration of Kwanzaa. This observance is an adaptation of traditional harvest celebrations in Afrika and offers U.S.-born Afrikans an alternative to the very commercialized Christmas celebration. Kwanzaa is actually observed between December 26th. and January 1st. However, the scheduling by other prisoner organizations of Christmas observances made this earlier date necessary.

The H.A.C.O./1-11 Kwanzaa celebration was comprised of a ritual of symbols in which ears of corn, fruit, candles, and other items were displayed to symbolize collective work and responsibility, unity, and other such principles; presentation of gifts/rewards to persons from outside the prison who have been of special help to H.A.C.O. and/or the 1-11 Jaycees; the meal; native Afrikan tribal music, American "soul" musid, and other music by artists of Afrikan descent; and dancing.

Gifts/rewards were given to the following persons: Scott Marshall(sponsor for both H.A.C.O. and 1-11), Ed Murphy, Buddy Hogan, Charles Umberger, Ernie Chambers, Fannie Claxton.

Possibly the most uplifting feature of the celebration was the "meal." Due to the fact that both H.A.C.O. and the 1-11 Jaycees are currently at the opposite end of wealthy, individual members and guests from the outside were encouraged to go into their pockets to purchase snack items for the observance. At the conclusion of the ritual of symbols, the congregation was asked to place food items upon the ritual table. It was beautiful indeed to see those people who had brought food placing their sacks upon the table without any apparent concern about ownership. When it was time to eat, the sacks were opened and the food unselfishly placed upon the trays for everyone's consumption.

-January, 1983

H.A.C.O. Banquet 1987

On Saturday, April 18, we held our 11th. annual banquet...The main features of the banquet were: the awards ceremony; address on the banquet theme("that cultural awareness is key to liberation"), and a performance of traditional African dance. In addition to the presentation of awards to the members of the organization's various committees, awards were given, for special service to the organization, to: H.A.C.O. member, Hanee(Robert Toney) and to Sheba(Judith Jordan).

Professor Brennan Taylor of the Sociology Dept. at U.N.O. delivered the address on cultural awareness and focused primarily on education, posing the question of whether the American school system's "educational" process is a tool of liberation or a tool of enslavement. He spoke of the importance of our(as students and as parents of students) being vigilant to protect ourselves from the destructive effects of an "educational" process designed to lead us away from ourselves, from knowledge of who we are.

Probably the most exciting and spirit-touching facet of the evening's program was the dance performance by the family troupe of Sandra McSwain and her children--Mia, Monica, and Ervin III. Sandra performed with her eight-year-old son first and then performed with her daughters, ages fifteen and seventeen. Dressed alike, in traditional African garments, Sandra and her daughters presented a kind of optical illusion in which it seemed one were watching three images of the same person. The unity of their dance was both real and symbolic, pointing to the three women's unity of size, complexion, and movement and, symbolically, to the unity that should be characteristic of all our families and to our largest family--Africa itself. Moreover, the performance by Mother and Son exhibited both family love and the rewards of a nurturing guidance.

In addition, live music was performed by "Destiny," a group from Omaha comprised of all(but one) Sisters. The meal was magnificently prepared by a team of H.A.C.O. members and consisted of barbecued beef ribs, turnip and mustard greens, black-eyed peas, yams, and wheat rolls. Chocolate cake and vanilla ice cream were served for dessert.

-May, 1987

Annual African History Program

On February 23rd, we held our annual African History program. As with the case of all our meetings, we began the program with a libation ceremony, giving tribute to the spirits of our ancestors. The Alaga(Chairman), after giving a brief explanation of the libation ceremony, read a poem he had written in tribute to the departed African scholars, Chancellor Williams and Cheikh Anta Diop. Makoala Marake, a student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and a citizen of Lesotho in Southern Africa, delivered a traditional prayer in his own language and then in English...

Hassan Muhammad, the Olotu Eko(Education Chairman) of the organization) gave a presentation on the life of the great African military strategist, Hannibal. In addition to speaking of Hannibal's accomplishments, Hassan addressed the question of his identity and European historians' attempts to turn this historic figure into something other than an African...

Dr. Imafedia Okhamafe of Nigeria, who teaches at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, delivered a presentation on "arrested development."...Imafedia spoke of the situation of African people in the U.S., Africa, and elsewhere throughout the diaspora as commonly being one of arrested development. In describing this condition, he cited the introduction of Christianity and Islam into Africa and the existence of institutional racism in the U.S. and explained that our development has been arrested, not only by these and other foreign influences, but by either or both our failure to control the impacts upon us of these influences and our tendency to **react** to them. After further elaboration on this matter of arrested development, Imafedia invited us to contribute our own thoughts, pose questions, and so forth. The discussion that followed raised several issues: how do we protect ourselves against Europeanization of our mentalities by Caucasian-run institutions, how do we resurrect our traditional African values and how do we make application of them to present-day situations, the danger of establishing individuals as role models, etc...

-March, 1993

BACK IN TIME II

Religious Imports From Yorubaland

"Yoruba traditional culture and religious art had seemed destined for total obliteration in the wake of the slave trade, civil wars, and modernization. By the early decades of the nineteenth century the stability of western Yorubaland had been destroyed. The protective military arm of the old empire of the Oyo Yoruba, centered in their capital city of Oyo-Ile near the Niger River, collapsed during severe political dislocations following the end of the reign of King Awole in 1796...

"With the restraining hand of Oyo weakened, inevitably civil wars flared, starting with conflict at the ancient city of Owu in 1821...While all this was happening, the Yoruba were beset by the Atlantic slave trade.

"New World Yoruba emerged from all this strife. Ketu Yoruba men and women captured by the Dahomeans turned up in Haiti and Brazil, where to this day they are called by the Dahomean word 'nago'. Oyo and other captives of the Fulani were brought to Cuba, Brazil, and the Caribbean, notably Trinidad. Thus the deities--the 'orisha' of the city-states of Oyo and Ketu were introduced to Cuba and Brazil...

"What is more, especially in Cuba and Brazil, New World Yoruba were introduced to the cult of Roman Catholic saints, learned their attributes, and worked out a series of parallelisms linking Christian figures and powers to the forces of their ancient deities. Thus the smallpox deity was equated, in some places, with Saint Lazurus because of the latter's wounds illustrated in chromolithographs. Thus the Virgin Mary was sometimes equated with the sweet and gentle aspect of the multifaceted goddess of the river, Oshun. Thus Shango, the Yoruba thunder god, in Cuba was frequently equated with Saint Barbara, whose killers were struck dead by God with lightning.

"Yoruba-Americans, outwardly abiding by the religious proprieties of the Catholics who surrounded them, covertly practiced a system of thought that was a creative reorganization of their own traditional religion. Luminously intact in

the memories of black elders from Africa, the goddesses and gods of the Yoruba entered the modern world of the Americas."

-February, 1994

From FLASH OF THE SPIRIT by Robert Farris Thompson

Yoruba carvings signifying "iwa"--fine character, balance, traditional ways, submission to moral authority or higher forces.

From FLASH OF THE SPIRIT

Africans And The Indigenous People Of The U.S.: Friendships And Alliances

As early as 1657 Africans and Indians in Hartford "joined in an uprising and destroyed some buildings" in the settlement.

In New York early in 1712--a few years after the warning from Lord Cornbury--"some Negro slaves of the Cormantine and Pawpaw nations, together with a few Indians...on March 25 formed a plot "to destroy all the whites in the town." On April 6, when the plans were put into motion...they set fire to an outhouse and waited for the white inhabitants of the area to respond to the alarm, being "prepared to slay each person who came to put out the blaze." Their resolve, their weapons, and the element of surprise made it possible for the conspirators to kill nine persons and wound seven others before soldiers were ordered out. Then the insurrectionists retreated and scattered into the night. The next day the colonial troops were joined by the local

militia. In the course of the ensuing battles, some black rebels committed suicide rather than submit to capture...

In the decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War Black Indian societies were reported in New Jersey, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Connecticut, Tennessee, and Massachusetts. Some managed to live as maroons, distant from a white society they rejected...

Around the time African settlers arrived in Florida, refugees from the Creek Nation also settled there. This group called themselves "Seminoles" or runaways, and their Muskegee culture accepted a variety of Indian ethnic groups...For Seminole people used to admitting those who were different, it was easy to accept Africans.

Africans proved far more familiar with Florida's tropical terrain than Spaniards or Seminoles. They transplanted a rice cultivation method practiced in Senegambia and Sierra Leone. Used to a more moderate climate, Seminoles began to learn how to survive in Florida from these ex-slaves...

The Seminole Nation offered their new friends some valuable gifts in return. Africans and other ethnic groups enjoyed an independent village status...

-February, 1992

From THERE IS A RIVER by Vincent Harding and BLACK INDIANS: A HIDDEN HERITAGE

Negro Abraham,
an interpreter and comrade of the Seminole Indians
in their fight for self-determination
against U.S. military forces.

Library of Congress

John Horse (or Cohia) joined forces with Wild Cat as his black sub-chief, and together the two men led militant Seminole forces fighting the United States for twenty years.

Birth of Pan-Africanism

"The idea of Pan-Africanism first arose as a manifestation of fraternal solidarity among Africans and peoples of African descent. It was originally conceived by a West Indian barrister, Mr. Henry Sylvester-Williams of Trinidad, who practised at the English bar at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the present. It appears that during his undergraduate days and after, Mr. Sylvester-Williams established close association with West Africans in Britian and later acted as legal adviser to several African chiefs and other native dignitaries who visited the United Kingdom on political missions to the Colonial Office.

"To combat the aggressive policies of British imperialists Mr. Sylvester-Williams took the initiative in convening a Pan-African conference in London in 1900 as a forum of protest against the aggression of white colonizers and, at the same time, to make an appeal to the missionary and abolitionist traditions of the British people to protect the Africans from the depredations of the Empire builders..."

-February, 1986

From AN ABC OF COLOR by W.E.B. DuBois

What We've Been Called/What We've Called Ourselves

"During the late 1700s and 1800s, many free black organizations used the term African to make plain the gap between their debased American identity and their lost origins. The Free African Society, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Masonic African Lodge, the African Free Schools, and the African Clarkson Society are examples of organizations that proudly emphasized their African roots.

"The tide turned against that overt identification with the mother continent during the 1830s when pro-slavery interests mounted vigorous, well-funded campaigns to convince free blacks to return to Africa. Groups like the American Colonization Society alleged that blacks were inherently incapable of living among European-Americans as anything

but slaves and thus, they argued, free blacks were more suited for life in Africa. This transparent atttempt to bolster the institution of slavery provoked blacks to assert their identities as 'colored' Americans in reaction. 'Colored' fell out of favor following the abolition of slavery and black leadership settled on the term 'negro'.

..."As the 20th. century approached, black Americans found themselves under attack physically as well as academically; racial lynchings had become the rage during the 1880s and 1890s as thousands of mostly southern blacks were murdered.

"This wanton violence sparked a huge northward migration, and groups like the Afro-American Council were formed on the platform of racial solidarity and self-help. Again, an open acknowledgement of African roots seemed to characterize the thinking of many black leaders and theorists. Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanist movement virtually embodied this sentiment...The Jamaican-born black nationalist saw no conflict in naming one of his groups the Universal Negro Improvement Association, another the African Communities League and yet another the Black Cross Nurses. Garvey considered the capitalized term 'Negro' an honorable label for people of African descent.

"The artistic movement dubbed the Harlem Renaissance was focused on the emerging identity of the 'new Negro': a cosmopolitan sophisticate with one foot planted in the European canon and the other in the artistic traditions of the African diaspora. Although various publications, some scholars and activists continued using terms like 'black' and 'Afro-American', the term Negro became the preferred label.

"It remained that way until the late '60s, when the Black Power Movement ushered the word 'black' into common usage. By profoundly adopting a label traditionally deemed negative, black Americans sought to subvert European culture's seemingly omnipotent power of definition. It was an aggressive assertion of black America's ability to name itself..."

-February, 1989

From "African-American: What's In A Name" by Salim Muwakkil in the Jan. 25-31 IN THESE TIMES(Chicago)

KUUMBA

FOR GEORGE JACKSON

revolutionary spirit force
revolving/evolving/moving
in/around/through this madness

prison walls from the
pacific to atlantic oceans
with cells of ghetto cities
imprisoned by poverty
and guarded by trigger-happy cops

yes we hear you
revolutionary spirit force
moving from Soledad to Attika
from San Quentin to Sing-Sing
sentenced from birth--to life

we know the desire of those
doing time in 8 hour shifts
is to kill a black man
to spirit break you
make you submit

yes we hear you
revolutionary spirit force
guiding our actions
we still struggling
we still double-locked
but we still fighting
and soon/very soon
the walls of Jericho
will come tumbling down.

-by Yusef Alhakk
August 15, 1979

ALONENESS
(Looking for an Apology)

solitary respiration solidifies
the resounding pulsebeats,
and aloneness contributes to
a callous entity.
my silent song for sensation
engenders death-house poetry, sometimes.
These winds of thought: poetry
or madness(and **not** the insane brand)
is not meant to be a crutch just
literary fortitude among the shackled folk;
secured in this concentration camp:
certain questions - my refuge.
I shall find my antithesis,
uproot my lost, disconcerted consciousness
and stare at the cretin who bypassed me
with today's mail(and yesterday's
yestermonth's and yesteryear's).
Silence, solitude, and desolation
dissects this introspection,
and rancor battles serenity but
I can eradicate my contrite incense
because you forgot to
honor your myriad of
commitments...
Those times.

-by Wili Otey
(May his spirit be at peace in the realm
of the ancestors)

January, 1980

HEAR MY WOMAN SONG, O MAN

Hear/feel/taste my woman song, O Man,
the melody is coded in tongue strokes.
My song is fire.
Surfacing in flames of rhythm,
carried from the place of all beginnings,
carried on the claws,
tucked beneath the wings.

My song - a seed planted
by the gods of our creation;
that you, O Man, and I, may celebrate.

Hear/feel/taste my woman song,
that rocks you to discovery,
and we climb and leap into the flame/song,
and touch in the fire/dance of our beginning.
My song is fire.

Hear/feel/taste my woman song, O Man,
that fills your mouth with flame,
the heated chant closes down your eyes,
and welds our limbs,
locked in fire/song.
Your lips and hands believe more
than they touch,
your mouth remembers and forgets more
than thirst, the thirst my woman song fills.
My song is fire.

Hear/feel/taste my woman song, O Man,
that beats against your ears,
in waves of flame.
My song re/arranges reality to soothe you,
as the seed propels to the place
of our beginning.
My song removes a thousand fears.
My song re/orders time and space.
My song is fire.

-by Inua Alameen

March, 1980

One-Forty Second

i don't know
how you got inside
to make me ugly
why cornrows and afros
and black
make for nothings
while hotirons mean at least i tried--
at least i didn't

sister call, say she hear i aint kep up
with the latest thang
and i used to be, i used to be so pretty.
Dey tell me don't give up
hand me paste
to shade my face
from its natural color.
and the man who buys me
to wear high heels
stole some grease
to lard me down, at his mama's house
powder and oil make me out
a 1940's minstrel clown
i steps high, looking fine
till i leave our neighbor-hood
leaning on white, at the light
i hear me knowing we aint fooling nobody.

-Agbala Nwany Acho Aziokwu

April, 1986

GREY IS THE COLOR OF MY TRUE LOVE'S HAIR

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural
woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many
years trying to out love hate.

Walking the middle passage of right, in the
gutters of wrong. Making high yellow compositions
from blue/black earth tones, by products of
savage lust on some Mary's land plantation.

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural
woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many
years trying to out love hate.

Oh, for the power to hold back the passage
of time, for one eternal moment, free to love
as if there were no clocks, no calendars, to tell
us when to stop.

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural
woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many
years trying to out love hate.

Grey is the color of my true love's hair, older
now from waiting for me to stop performing
in cheap movies, starring too old co-stars in
the role of Simon Legree.

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural
woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many
years trying to out love hate.

-by Walt Gholson

October, 1989

HALLOWEEN ON THE STREETS

The loud noises of children
On any night
Might spell the end
On a Pean street, on a mean street
In the city.

It may be Valentine or Halloween,
Either, we think is for candy or kisses,
Not shots and bloody despair
Timed to bronze fear--
As deep in hue as oak leaves,
As yellow as those on birch--
In tears of sorrow.

A lovely night of death it is,
Any night is given to death,
To drive-by looting of limbs, of life.
Young bloods, turned to bones
Are driven to kill, to maim,
To steal the earth's young voices.

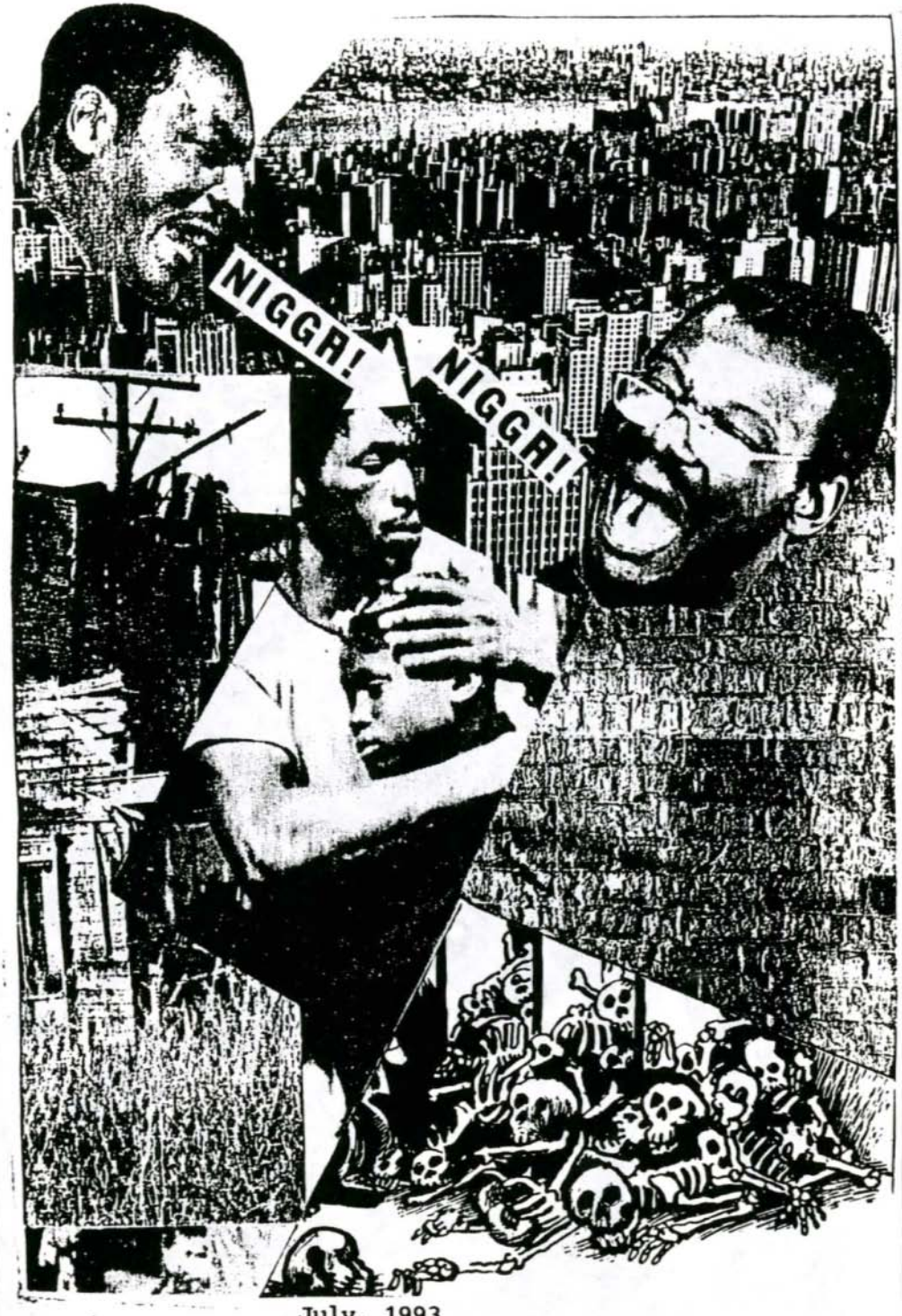
Bones pull up to curbs,
Take the aborigine of breath,
First blush of youth,
Scatter it as so many leaves,
Strewn to dance and die.

Bones sit in cars,
Swagger down streets.
Bones dance as by music,
Only they can hear
At a masked ball,
Boyz in the Hood, in red, in blue
Are ghosts entrapped in colors
Bones as inmate,
Bones drunk on beer,
Bones living in ignorance,
Dancing without care
In a land of nightmares
And gluttonous dreams
as fear.

-by Ella Robinson February, 1992

-October, 1991

-September, 1993


NIGGA!
NIGGA!

Dean Smith

Andrea Michelle Smith

Katherine Graham

Greg Graham

VISUAL AID

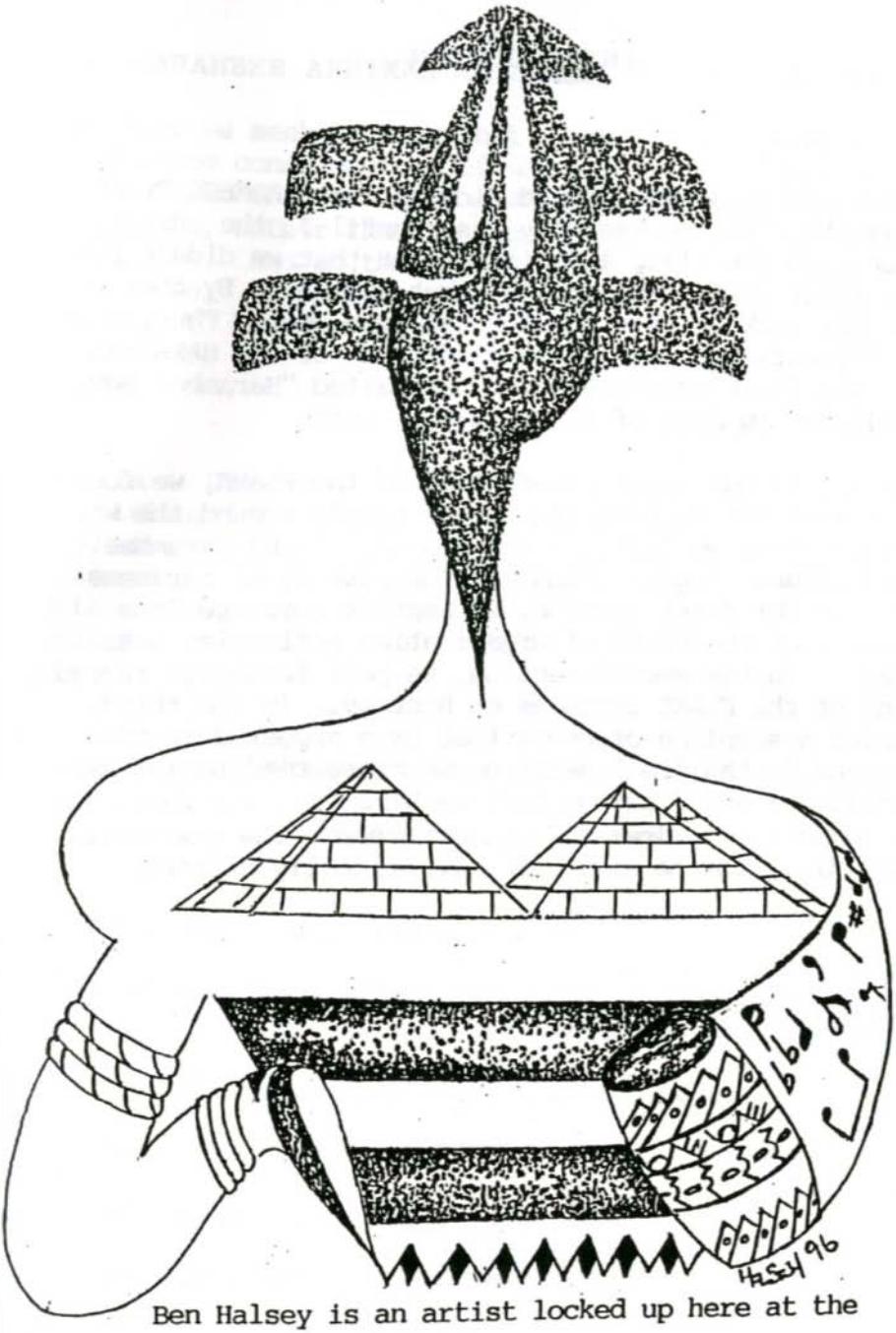
Marvin D. "Swede" Johnson.

Johnson

–January, 1996

by Dexter Brown

-June, 1991
This brother's name is now "Jabari."



Ben Halsey is an artist locked up here at the state prison.

-October, 1996

INTRODUCTION

This annual African History edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME began as the 20th.-anniversary issue until I, the editor, dug deep into our files and figured out that we didn't put out our first newsletter in 1978, but in 1979. By then, much of the work on this edition had been done. Thus, this be the "Almost-20th.-Anniversary Edition" of the HARAMBEE FLAME. The first edition, which was called "Harambee News," was published in June of 1979.

Ordinarily, in our February editions of the FLAME, we focus on aspects of the history of African people around the world. In this edition, we focus on the history of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization and the history of our newsletter. In the first section, we reprint coverage from past issues of the FLAME of organization activities over the years. In the second section, we pull from past February editions of the FLAME features on history. In the third, we reprint a sampling of poems that have appeared in the FLame. And in the final section, we present editorial cartoons/collages and drawings that we have run. The dates that appear after the various articles represent the newsletter editions in which the articles were orignally carried.

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right, rather than at the expense of any other group of people. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

NGUZO SABA(Seven Principles)

Umoja - Unity
Kujichagulia - Self-determination
Ujima - Collective work & responsibility
Ujamaa - Cooperative economics
Nia - Purpose
Kuumba - Creativity
Imani - Faith

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Alaga(Chairman) - Nbasa

Eso/Alakoso Asha(Sgt.-at-Arms/Chairman of Cultural Affairs Committee) - Kenny Walker

Olotu Eko(Education Chairman) - *Mondo

Eleto(Administrative Chairman) - Walid Akil

Akowe(Secretary) - Neb Ankh Amen

Akapo(Treasurer) - Ptah Neferu Ra

Akewi(Librarian) - Nkosi

*HARAMBEE FLAME Editor